

RECKLESS RALPH'S DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

(A Reprint)

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A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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THE GREAT FIVE CENT WIDE-A-WAKE LIBRARY.

By George H. Cordier.

One of the fondest memories the writer has of his boyhood days, is the pleasure he enjoyed from reading the stories, tales, and romances, published in the fascinating old Wide A Wake Library. In fact, the writer can say that he was brought up on that entrancing old time publication. The very first he ever read were some of the first numbers; and they have never lost their charm from that far distant day when the writer, then a little boy, first turned their magic pages, to the present time. In some respects, there never existed among the many old time "Libraries" any that equalled the Wide A Wake Library.

It was unique; and had a place all by itself. It cast a magic spell, a romantic charm, over its readers; and the writer, as he turns the time-yellowed pages of the few he has, feels once more the thrill of long past years; and the old charm comes again to cast its potent spell over his mind and fancy. The Wide A Wake Library was the first of many published by the Tousey Co.; and to the writers mind, it was the very best of all that they ever put out.

It contained thrilling, startling, and wonderful stories of travels and adventures in all parts of the world; together with fine historical romances taken from English publications; and reprints of sensational novels and romances very popular at the time it made its first appearance. It's first number was "Tom Brown's Schooldays", published Sept. 10, 1878. Then came "The Pirate and Robinson Crusoe"; followed by stories by the famous authors, Captain Marryatt and Harrison Ainsworth, and stories taken from the Arabian Nights. Its twelfth number was "Shorty, or, Kicked into Good Luck". Here, Shorty, the comic character, afterwards so famous--began his long career in the "Library", after having first appeared in the Boys of New York. The thirteenth number was a magnificent romance called, "The Devil's Diamond." This intensely interesting tale was first published by an English firm, The Hogarth House Co., and then was republished by the Wide Awake Library.

It was a splendid romance, full of color and mystery; and the action of the story never froze for an instant. It is one of the best the writer ever read; and has remained one of his favorites for over a half century. The story is such a powerful one and so full of dramatic fire and thrilling situations, that the writer feels that he would be doing a service to his readers by giving a short account of it. The story relates the fortunes of the hero, Richard of Ravenscrest, during the conquest of Peru by Pizarro and the Spaniards. Richard had been a member of the expedition formed for the invasion of the Inca Empire, but quarreling with Pizarro, he flies from his camp, guided by a Fiery Hand that had suddenly appeared and warned him of his danger. He has a series of marvelous adventures in which the Fiery Hand plays a prominent part.

By recovering the Mystic Jewel of the Incas-lost for centuries-the wonderful Devils Diamond, he fulfills an ancient prophecy and, while aided by the demon guardian of the Mystic Jewel, he defeats the Spaniards for the time being, and becomes the master of Peru. But the Inca Empress was doomed; as treachery was at work, in spite of all that Richard could do, the Spaniards were successful; and he was forced to leave the country, taking with him a fortune in jewels, given him by the last of the Incas, whom he had endeavored in vain, to defend.

It is impossible to give an account of all the many fine stories that appeared in the Wide A Wake Library. Only those known to the writer can be noted. Another fine story, enjoyed by the writer, was "Dick Dauntless" and its sequel, "The Kingdom in the Sea". This was also first published by The Hogarth House Co. It was a highly interesting pirate tale with an element of the mysterious about it. It is number fifteen on the early lists of Wide A Wake. From No. 15 to No. 30, there were mostly stories that had made first appearance in the early numbers of The Boys of New York. No. 30 and 31 were two parts of the same story originally published by Hogarth House under the title, "The King of Diamonds and the Four Knaves". It was a grand historical romance of the time of the Great Napoleon, and is exceedingly absorbing and thrilling. From No. 31 to 42, the stories were mostly reprints of old time sensational novels very popular in their day. Stories of pirates and highwaymen predominated. Such titles as: "The Pirate Doctor"- "The Pirate Chief"- "Dick Clinton"- "The Masked Highwaymen and Ned Scarlet"- and "The Daring Highwaymen" gives some idea of their nature. No. 43 was a highly interesting story called, "The Demon of the Deep". This was the first of three tales of the same nature, which included "The Island of Mystery" and "Satan, or, the

Mystery of Ten Years". The same Characters appeared in all these stories, which told of marvelous adventures in wonderful submarine boats. All three stories first ran thru the pages of The Boys of New York; the first two in its early numbers, and the last, many years later.. From No. 44 to 50, the stories were mainly tales that had first been published in the same glamorous old paper, and illustrated by the quaint and crudely drawn illustrations, peculiar to the early numbers of that fascinating old sheet. Nos. 51-52-53 were three Dick Lightheart stories, by the famous author, Bracebridge Hemyng. Nos. 54 to 74 were mainly reprints of sensational romances, among them: "The Pirate Schooner" - "The Gold Hunters" - "The Pirates of America" (being a very interesting and informative history of Am. Pirates) - "Three-Fingered Jack" - The Sea King - The Devil on Two Sticks - The Wild Robber - The Lighthouse Murder - The Assassin's Doom - and The Robbers of the Rhine.. Numbers 75 to 88, were the original Jack Harkaway Stories, first published in Boys of England where the hero, Jack Harkaway first became known to fame, and four of the Dick Lightheart stories being the concluding numbers, namely: Dick Lightheart at Sea - D.L. Around the World - D.L. in London - and D.L.'s Victory.. From No. 91 to 118, the numbers comprised the entire Claude Duval Series which was only published in the very earliest numbers of Wide A Wake Library. For some reason it was soon discontinued; and all of the numbers are now very rare and almost unobtainable. The series was first published in America by the firm of R.H. DeWitt in 1868, ten years before appearing in Wide A Wake. It was first published in England, if the writer is not mistaken - having a long career in English papers

before republication by the R.M.DeWitt Co., in the U.S. It was issued by that firm in yellow covered books with a comical crude illustration on the front cover, and a list of titles on the backs. The whole series is exceedingly exciting and interesting; one in particular, called "Duval Denounced, or, The Haunted Mansion", being especially thrilling. No. 121 was one of the most famous boy's stories ever written: "Jack Rushton, or, Alone In the Pirate's Lair." This noted story was immensely popular in its day; and the hero was a favorite character with boys of both England and America. The first chapters made their appearance in number one, Volume one, of The Boys of England, published Nov. 24, 1866.

The writer is the happy possessor of forty volumes of English publications: Boys of England-Young Men of Great Britain-and Our Boys Journal; and he has the first six volumes of The Boys of England.

On consulting the first volume of that magazine, he finds that the story was originally published as "Alone in the Pirate's Lair". It was a grand pirate story, and served as a model for many others of a like nature that appeared in the libraries and story papers of the long past days. From No. 122, the great majority of the stories, like those we have noted-made their premier appearance in the Boys of New York. The quaint old woodcuts that added to front pages, are very interesting, the majority of them taken from the very early numbers of that fascinating old paper. Among the many stories from Nos. 122 to 337, are: "Charlie, Mike & Don" taken from Vol. XXI, Boys of England-Thirteen-The Brotherhood of Death-two parts of the same story, first published in Boys of New York, and a thrilling tale of murder and mystery-Meta, The Girl Crusoe-very exciting and interesting-A Trip to the Center of the

Earth, a very wonderful story-Double Six-The Dominoes of Death-The Prairie Witch-The Hunters of the Silver Trail, the same story in two parts, also from Boys of New York.

Before we go further, we wish to explain that it was a custom of the "Library" to divide a story into two or three parts when it was too long for a single number..From No.337 to No.391, most of the stories are taken from the E.J.Brett publications, the Boys of England and The Young Men of Great Britain. Among these English stories, and known to the writer, were: The Haunted House of Deadman's Corner-Sir Guy's Secret-The Fortunes of an Acrobat, in three parts first published in 1897 in Young Men of Great Britain-Out With Captain Cook-Every Inch a Sailor-Walter's Secret-Outlaws of Berkely Forest-The House of a Hundred Terrors-Oswald the Unknown-Adventures of a Free Lance-The Servian Spy-Sword and Scimitar-Adam Bell-The Archers of Englewood-The Knight of the Red Cross ..After No.391, the stories of the "Library" were drawn from many sources. A few were taken from English publications-a great many from the Tousey story papers-while a great number appear to have been written especially for the "Library"..As before stated, it is an utter impossibility to describe all the hundreds of splendid stories, tales, and romances, that charmed the readers of The Wide A Wake Library.

The writer can only give some further account of those known to him, in addition to those already noted. No.137-The Mysterious Messenger-or-The Secret of the Three Black Stars-was an exceedingly interesting tale of a fortune life in time; and guarded by a mysterious person till it could be placed in the hands of its rightful owners. It was

first published in the earlier Boys of New York..No.145-Three Yankee Chums-was another early story of the same paper,very exciting and absorbing..No.146-The Boy Clown-was a tale of the stage in days when pantomimes were exceedingly popular, also from Boys of New York.

No.148-The Sea Friends,and its second part-Under the Ocean-was a story of marvelous and exciting adventure in a wonderful submarine boat,in search of a sunken wreck, guarded by a horde of hideous Sea Fiends, half man and half fish..The Wharf Boys of New York,was a fine tale of the devotion of two boys,when hunted by enemies to plan their destruction...Ferret,the Little Detective,and its second part,The Man of Many Faces,was an exceptionally fine detective story filled with strange incidents and tense situations...Chased Around the World, The Detective's Mistake, was another of the same type,highly exciting and interesting.. Jack Hawley, was a story of the Russian-Turkish War of 1877...Between 1870 and 1878 a great many mysterious disappearances took place in New York City, and the story,Red Circle,and its second part,The Nemesis,or, Tracked to Their Doom, was based on this fact,and was a terrible tale of a secret criminal brotherhood having an elaborate subterranean haunt,into which they lured men of wealth,and by torture,forced them to sign away their property;and then brutally murdered them.The story relates how a young man-son of one of their victims-penetrated their frightful secret, bringing destruction and doom upon the whole murderous society.

Satan's Tree,or,The King of the Broad Palm,was a splendid story from an E.J.Brett publications,of a youth with six fingers on each hand,who becomes king of an African nation,where all kings had six-fingered hands.

The Ghost of Paul Priestly, or, The Mystery of Haggard Hollow, was an exceptionally fine story of English origin, first published in this country in 1871 by Frank Leslie's Boys and Girls Weekly... Captain Tom Drake, and its sequel, Privateer Tom, was another highly popular tale that ran a long course in Boys of New York, before appearing in the "Library".

We now take note of the famous Frank Reade Stories. The first one in the "Library" was The Steam Man of the Plains, or, The Terror of the West. There seems to be some dispute among Dime Novel experts, as to the author of this story; and also as to which paper it originally appeared in. The writer claims no competency to decide; and can only state that he is positive that some of the early Frank Reade stories were first published in Boys of New York, as he had the numbers of that paper, containing them, many long years ago... Following the Steam Man, came: The Steam Horse-The Steam Team-The Steam Tally Ho-and The Steam Wonder. These five stories comprised the original Frank Reade Tales; and then Frank Reade, Sr., retired and gave place to Frank Reade, Junior, who was the hero in numerous stories of adventure, in contrivances invented by him, in which the motive power was electricity instead of steam. Following The Steam Wonder, came seven other fine tales in Wide A Wake, until we come to No. 791, and we have The Electric Man, or Frank Reade in Austrailia-The Electric Horse-The Electric Team-and The Queen Clipper of the Clouds. There is such a striking similarity of the first three of these tales as to suggest they were written in direct imitation of the first three Frank Reade tales, when steam was the motive power.

Be that as it may, the fourth story, The Queen Clipper of the Clouds, was certainly a direct imitation of a little-known story by Jules Verne, called, Robus, The Conqueror; while the story itself was illustrated with the very pictures in Vernes novel when first published in book form. As before stated, it is impossible to give an account of all the Frank Reade Stories contained in the Wide A Wake Library. We can only note two or three more.... Frank Reade and His Monitor of the Air, was a fine tale of adventure in Mexico; while The Electric Ice Boat, and The Electric Cyclone was no ordinary exertion of genius. The last story is the writer's favorite, and he considers it a masterpiece. The account of how the different strongholds of the Bandit Chief in No Man's Land were besieged and captured by Frank Reade with his Electric Cyclone, was nothing less than masterly; while the description of the three retreats of the outlaw band, is a brilliant effort of the imagination and deeply interesting.... The Electric Ice Boat is a most intriguing story and shares the writer's affections with the Cyclone tale. The vivid descriptions of the marvelous and exciting adventures in the Land of Crimson Snow, keep the reader spellbound, to the end of the narrative. All the Frank Reade stories we have noted, were published in the Boys of New York; and when republished in Wide A Wake Library, in the majority of cases, were illustrated with the same pictures.

Before closing this article, we report a couple of more novels, hoping we have been of some service to our readers, by calling their attention to a few of the many captivating stories and romances on the long list of the Wide Awake Library.

The Spectre of the Pueblo, and the Weird House of White Cliff, are two special favorites of the writer. Running the risk of being considered too prolific, the writer cannot refrain from mentioning one more tale that he greatly admires, called The Fighting Tevens, or, The Uovalues of Mystery, re-published from Vol. XXXVII, 1885. Young Men of Great Britain.. With No. 1172, the Library began republishing of many of its very early numbers; but the great majority of the old-time stories of pirates, highwaymen, and robbers, were entirely discontinued, their places, in many cases, being taken by stories of Civil War days. The writer cannot state the exact date when the "Library" was discontinued; but he beleives the numbers ran to about 1300, and that it ceased publication in the year 1896.

The writer hopes his article will be of some interest to his readers, as he has tried to give an adequate account of a grand old-time publication. To the writer's mind, there are very few of the old time "Libraries" that measured up to the Wide Awake standard. It was in a class by itself and so remained to ~~end of its existense~~..... The writer now ends what has truly been a labor of love, in endeavoring to describe the splendid oldtime Wide Awake Library.

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THE LATE ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

(From the Banner Weekly-Feb. 2, 1895-Vol. XIII-No. 638).

As a story-writer has made a profound impression on our literature, The New York Sun, speaking of this influence, says: "We had almost made up our minds that the race of great Novelists had ended for good, when Robert Louis Stevenson burst on the world with "Treasure Island". It was an old fashioned romance about pirates and treasure,

and our everyday boy who had his wits about him. It was about a subject which has been worn threadbare ever since there were pirates and treasure on the Spanish Main. It was not in any way, a love story. There was blood spilled in it by men who were seeking each other's lives with deadly purpose. ... "Treasure Island" will never die any more than "Robinson Crusoe"; because it is real, no matter how false all history may be... All of which is a tribute to the kind of novel it is---the romantic in adventure and human experience, and the exhibition it gives of human heroism. This is just what the popular Library of today is; and the enormous circulation which all good tales of that nature attain evidences the keen sagacity of the public in electing that reading which most excites admiration for the heroic in human life."

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THE WIDE AWAKE.

The Wide Awake, a monthly magazine for young folks and little ones, was edited by Ella Farman, and published by D. Lathrop & Co., Boston, Mass. It was exquisitely illustrated, delightful in matter, and equally entertaining and instructive. This was a magazine for young people, in the 1870's. It was something like Harpers Young People-St. Nicholas-Etc., so don't be fooled, as this is NOT a Frank Tousey Publication.

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WHO IS DOCTOR HOLMES ?

(From the Banner Weekly-Mar. 2, 1895) Vol. XIII-No. 642.)

"Who is Doctor Holmes?" a lady asked of a New England bookseller recently, according to the Boston Literary World; "I've never

heard of him, but his wife (Mary J. Holmes) writes lovely books."..Which recalls the story of the Boston woman going into the country store--where everything is sold, from a hayseed to a brass band--and asking at the book counter--"Have you Browning?" The sapient behind the counter, smelling of codfish balls and madder calico, not dismayed at any demand, answers considerately: "No Browning, Miss.--but we have blacking and blueing, and we have a man who does whitening. We occasionally do pinking. Would any of these do?"

The fact is, the amount of precise misinformation in the world, is so great, that sometimes it seems as if common schools were a superfluity, and colleges an excrescence. When a newly-elected Congressman strays into the Congressional Library, with its million values of books at call, and says to Spofford, the librarian:

"I say, Mister, who the deuce writ all these books?", it means that books and wisdom are not at all necessary for a Congressman; so what's the use of "Barnin" anyhow?"

NICK CARTER SIGNED FOR FILM CHARACTER.

Hollywood, Apr. 21.: Nick Carter, the fiction detective, will be brought to the screen, it was announced today, by Surety productions. The new studio filed papers of organization and prepared to produce four pictures a year. The studio said it had at its disposal, all of the approximately 1000 Nick Carter stories.

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